

What Question or Comment do you have for the Charter Review Committee?

Submitted via link at watertown-ma.gov/charter and crc@watertown-ma.gov

1. 1/11/21

Matt Lashof-Sullivan

I would like to submit this comment for the charter review,

I understand the appeal of a council/manager system, and I think it has much to recommend it -- the town is generally well-run. But there is an issue of diffusion of responsibility. The Town Manager doesn't have any direct accountability to the constituents, because he is not directly elected. But when I have occasionally reached out to the Town Council about an issue, I am often told that it's an issue for the town manager. Same basic issue for the School Committee vs. the Superintendent.

I would like for the democratically-accountable branches to at least have clear authority over any issue that would normally be handled by the Town Manager/Superintendent. I envision something like a general delegation of many matters to the Town Manager/Superintendent, but with the proviso that the council/committee is free to pass a resolution on any issue within the authority of the Town Manager/Superintendent, and such resolution would be binding. I don't want to hear from my elected officials that they won't/can't do something because it's for the Town Manager/Superintendent to do.

Generally, for any given town issue there should be some individual or group who is democratically elected and who has authority over that issue. It should be clear to all residents who that person/group is.

Separately, I'm not sure that district councillors should continue to exist. Watertown is small, and these district councillors are always running unopposed, whereas the at-large races are always contested. It's better not to have an elected office where nobody is running for it.

2. 1/15/21

Tiffany York

Dear Watertown Charter Review Council, please read through the following, discern, and act on my request to include Vision for Watertown within the subcommittee for the Preamble. Without Vision, Understanding of Watertown's reality (amongst the most vulnerable and impacted in Watertown), and Equity frameworks the preamble will only further perpetuate inequity, systemic racism, and white centered policies. Further, in my opinion, in no way is a subcommittee on the Preamble and then the same members on the charter review council voting on said preamble...fair or equitable. Nor is it transparent. Nor is it collaborative.

Watertown Vision Section

Possible Visions to discuss with representatives from MOST impacted community members

- City Government Equity Statement:
<https://www.racialequityalliance.org/2020/05/26/milwaukee-county-passes-ordinance-on-racial-equity/>; What will our town council/mayor/ government be held to?

- Biotech (Is Watertown the next Kendall)
 - Representative: residents potentially employed by biotech businesses: Hourly/service/admin/researchers/scientists
- Forward-Thinking
- Adaptable
- Scalable
- Watertown stays “townie”
 - Representative: Folks over age of 60 (or ages at which Social Security is main income), multigenerational families who own property/land/businesses
 - Town Manager Driscoll (in position for over 25 years) and any other elected or appointed person for this longevity
- What impact does Prioritizing a passing budget every year have?
 - Representative: Town Auditor, Town Manager (for pros/cons of passing budget every year- what did that actually cost us?)
 - What has been asked for by community members and not happened- review of what has been asked of Town Council or Town Manager and didn’t pass due to ‘budget’
 - COVID- the city’s govt, school, programs etc basically had to grind to a halt when COVID hit... lots of reasons why, and if budgets had been expanded in certain areas/collaboration leveraged before COVID, where might be in a better spot? And how can we use those learnings to guide Charter and City policy and personnel?
- What impact does Raising Taxes for below have and how will that inform our future
 - Mental Health Programs
 - Livability
 - People, Positions, Changes
 - Housing/Affordable housing
- Representatives who live, build, engage with and in Affordable Housing
- Town Council needs to relay and present where our town is with affordable housing policies/percentages/previous contract language with companies coming into town, policy impact, lived impact within residents who currently reside in affordable housing
- Reparations/Home Owners: <https://www.oaklandca.gov/topics/first-time-homebuyer-mortgage-assistance-program-map>; Charter should have language for a 1,3,5 year plan for an outcome of loan programs like City of Oakland; <https://www.cityofevanston.org/government/city-council/reparations>; Charter should have reparations commitment again 1, 3, 5 year road map
- Access/Training/Job support for Watertown residents
 - Representative: Library folks who have worked on these type programs- learning from their programs; School Admin- they have a professional development team (assume it is funded through town budget?) how do we leverage that for Watertown city/vision
- Inclusive, Livable, Thriving City and Community
 - Representative: other city/town reps for Equitable Transportation Plans, Reparations Plans, etc.
 - Operationalizing Racial Equity, Community-Focused, Collaborative
- The below is an excerpt I found particularly empowering and visionary and I have replaced Chicago with Watertown for emphasis and linked the full report at the end

“...envisioning a **Watertown** that no longer concentrates poverty and racially segregated people from socio-economic opportunity; where structural racism no longer is manifested in city policies, programs

or investments; and where a person's race or zip code no longer determine their health outcomes, potential to build wealth, or access to opportunity.

Residents from across the City are sustaining racial justice protests demanding reform in policing and across a range of government programs where the continued legacy of systemic racism creates deep socio-economic disparities for Black and Brown communities. Now is the time for bold thinking and action. Perhaps never before has the City been better prepared to commit to a new course that is founded on the power of community, that commits to desegregating our city, that provides community wealth building pathways for all regardless of the color of their skin or their transit line, and that promotes healthy communities to close the racial life expectancy gap. Through thoughtful policy decisions, investments and program placement that incorporate these values, development occurring in transit-served locations can and should more effectively benefit all **Watertownians**, regardless of whether they reside near transit." Paraphrased from :

<https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/sites/etod/Pdfs/eTODPolicyPlanFinalText-AltText-ScreenReaderCompatible.pdf>

I appreciate the Charter Review Council's consideration, review, discernment and action in establishing our city's vision, preamble, and framework in collaboration with folks who are most impacted in Watertown through the above issues. Without Vision, Understanding of Watertown's reality (amongst the most impacted in Watertown), and Equity frameworks the preamble will serve no one.

3. 1/18/21

Stephanie Venizelos

197 Westminster Ave

Hello, Town Councilors/Charter Review Committee Members,

When will minutes will be posted for the six meetings that have taken place since late October? The only meeting minutes I could find on the CRC website page are from October 6th - linked to this week's meeting agenda. Although I have watched many of the meetings on WCATV's site, I'd appreciate the option to quickly review minutes from the last meeting, when I receive the reminder. If they are posted somewhere else, please let me know where to locate them (I've tried numerous links in the 2020 folder...).

I appreciate the time and effort you are all contributing to this important process, and look forward to participating in whatever ways I can, over the coming months.

4. 1/19/21

Jocelyn Tager

Most of these meetings I can't attend because of work commitments. However, I would like to make some observations. I've worked in other municipalities such as Cambridge and Medford. As far as I can tell, we have a decent Town Council President/Town Manager system.

Cambridge, like us, elects nine town councilors. However, those nine choose from within their ranks, the mayor. Who knows the wheeling and dealing behind the scenes in selecting the councilor who is to be mayor. Cambridge also has a town manager.

Our system, in which all our residents can vote to elect our Town Council President is far superior. And our Town Manager attends Town Council meetings.

Medford has a mayor, but their mayor does not sit on Town Council, so there is a lot of back-door stuff and shenanigans whenever there are major issues to address. Because our TC President sits on Town Council there seems to be much less of what I witnessed in watching Medford.

Belmont's three selectmen system seems too small to me.

So, I think our TC President/Town Manager system has worked well-or well enough.

I'd love to see our Town Council election system discussed. It seems to me that four town council members have elections every two years and three seem to have none at all. This structure seems unfair, although I like my District Councilor a lot. She has had a tough election not too long ago. But the others have been on Town Council with no election (running unopposed) for a very long time.

5. 1/25/21

Tia Tilson

While I missed the first 15 minutes of tonight's meeting (I couldn't find a working zoom link!), I don't think a timeline was voted on? I attended the rest of the meeting; did I miss the conversation about communications?

I find the structure of reviewing the Charter within the frame of accountability, transparency, accessibility very helpful and appreciate this approach. However, I find it difficult as a member of the public to understand what has been discussed at past meetings and what is scheduled to be discussed going forward. How can the public fully participate if they can't find the agendas, minutes and supporting documents on the town website? Watertown Forward, which I became aware of about three weeks ago, has been able to provide excellent summaries of these meetings with links to relevant documents. This has become a living example of how Watertown governance falls short on transparency, accessibility and accountability. This is why I am trying to get clear on how the public can participate and for how long.

Might I offer a few observations from my first meeting tonight? The barriers to public understanding and participation are high, and I recommend greater outreach and more time for public input.

The Charter website:

- The agenda for tonight wasn't posted in advance.
- The zoom link was broken in several places on the Charter page.
- Minutes are not posted for any of the previous meetings.
- The agenda/document link for the previous meetings only goes to the agendas -and doesn't include the documents.
- Reference documents are hard to find on the Charter website. And don't seem to include the Collins memo referenced in tonight's discussion.

It is awesome that 25 people participated in the Zoom call that is about 20 more people than came to the most popular meeting during the last Charter review. And of the 25 names called out, I know most of them to be highly engaged activists in this town. It shouldn't be this difficult for people to be involved.

Also, a formal request. Since budget seems to be a point of reference - I would like to request a document be distributed as part of this process that shows the size of the budget at the time of the last charter review and budget growth over the 10 years between 2010 and 2020. I request that it also include projections on where we anticipate the town budget to be by 2030. We should be considering the Charter and town governance structure for our future growth.

6. 2/8/21

Pi Conde

535 Mt. Auburn St.

I am interested in volunteering

7. 2/12/21

Krystyn Elek

40 Union St.

I would like to see the Charter Review Committee take up the issue of WPD accountability at the local level. There are statistics from WPD records that suggest bias exists in the citations and arrests made in Watertown. The WPD has been approached by community members with reasonable proposals for increased community engagement and additional anti-bias training, only to reject these efforts. There are serious allegations of unprofessional behavior and culture within the department. It is unacceptable to many Watertown residents that the police are accountable to one man alone, the Town Manager. The community is wanting greater accountability, appropriate and relevant transparency, and a reimaged budget for the police. There are many communities around the country that have acted through their charters to create closer oversight of local police departments.

8. 2/16/21

Ilana Mainelli

97 Duff St.

I present these thoughts/suggestions/comments in no particular order. Unfortunately, I have not grouped them chronologically or by subject.

1. After we approve the revised charter, if we keep the Town Manager as an appointed (unelected) position, we need to increase the transparency and public input into the specifics of their job description and performance standards, and the evaluations of their performance. One way to address this would be to do the TM's evaluations in open meetings of the TC, not in executive session, even if the TC needs to use executive session to discuss salary specifics for the TM.
2. The Town Council President position, as the current charter defines it, is effectively a very weak "shadow" mayor that sort of runs interference between the public, the Town Council, the School Committee, and the Town Manager.

3. It is not reasonable to expect the Town Council President to do all the things people are asking of them when it is only a part time position. This leads me to think we would be better served by a full-time person in that role = a mayor.
4. Probably after we settle the Mayor/TM debate, we also need to address the makeup of our legislative body, the Town Council. We should discuss the ratio of representative councilors to at-large councilors, and the boundaries/size of the Town Council Districts.
5. Right now our 4 at-large Town Councilors all live in the same general section of Watertown. We should consider the extra weight this gives to those districts and the demographics in those neighborhoods.
6. We should change the composition of future Charter Review Commissions. This CRC should address who chooses the members and what are the qualifications for membership on future CRC's. In future, there should be at least 50% public representation. Probably more efficient not to have every TC on future CRC's. How will the "public" members of them be chosen?
7. More members of the CRC should have more input into the CRC meetings agendas.
8. If we keep an appointed TM, we should include requirements for them to interact with the public more often in their job description and then evaluate their performance of those expectations. Public forums at certain intervals. Answer correspondence and phone calls in certain timeframes? Involvement in non-business hours civic events, other than meetings.
9. I think the Town Council President has a conflict of interest in setting the agendas for, and running the meetings of, the CRC at which the future of a form of government to which they are central is being debated.
10. What is the current schedule for evaluating the TM's performance and renewing their contract vis a vis the schedule for completing and voting on this charter review? We don't want to be cornered on our choice of type of government by the existence of a contract for the TM that take us past the implementation date of the new charter.

9. 2/16/21
Rita Colafella
56 Cuba St.

I liked the macro review of the charter process since it uncovered some finer points. One theme that came up from certain questions and comments is that of equity, and how it still is not garnering the attention it so needs.

- The at-large vs. district representation discussion made me realize that the council's composition could be an easy lever for more equitable representation.
- The questions around COLA language, salary increases and health insurance brought this question to mind - are there members of the council who derived a good portion of their income/benefits from this position? Maybe this needs a deeper dive.
- The question about hiring a Diversity Officer had been asked and has been previously. Again, it is something that warrants serious consideration. There has not been a pro/con discussion about this.
- The idea about having qualifications or obtaining qualifications to hold town council office can hinder more equitable representation. Even though it may not be the intent, this suppresses participation as it may discourage persons without college degrees or persons with disabilities from even entertaining the idea of running for office.

10. 2/16/21
Rita Colafella
56 Cuba St.

This set of comments about the 2/16 Charter Review Meeting is a criticism. I had no issue with the macro review as it led to some great discussions and thoughts to consider. I had no issue with the request to put comments in the Q&A instead of the Chat as a lot of Zoom calls do something similar; it's just a facilitation mechanism. The straw poll motion at the end of the meeting, however, was an issue because it was political gameplay. I understand motions can be made by anyone at any time, and that there's process such as seconding the motion and having discussion before a roll call is taken because we need to maintain order. However, this episode was an unmitigated mess.

The timing of the motion caused people to context switch, whether that was the intent or not. It became a disorientating tactic that made me feel as if we were being manipulated. One minute, I am thinking "how can we keep current government form by changing representation composition or what kinds of policy-making decisions should come under the legislative body, and how does it affect other offices or committees in town?" The next minute, I am asking, "why is this motion being made? It is to get people to tip their hands or apply pressure?" With the exception of one vote, I was able to correctly guess all the votes, which was a disappointment, and the poll did little to provide guidance to Mike.

While I appreciate the heads up of this being a motion at every meeting, it now adds a gaming element to the process. Do committee members need to remember to quickly and loudly ask for discussion before the process becomes muddled? I have to wonder if this is what occurs at every town council meeting. I hope not because it would prevent any real examination of the issues or movement forward. It can also be a motivating factor behind the desire for a mayor and weak council.

11. 2/20/21
Jacky van Leeuwen
32 Whites Ave.

Can the charter include a responsibility of Town Council to require the Town Manager to report to TC annually on the retention rate of employees of color per department?

12. 2/20/21
Kate Coyne
120 Worcester St

1. Do we currently have a 360 peer review of our Town Manager and Department heads? If not, this is a problem which should be fixed asap (and done by a 3rd party, reviewed by Town Manager and Town Council).
2. If we had a mayor, would we have a 360 peer review for our Town Manager and Department heads given the Mayor is directly accountable via the people's vote, we would want some semblance of professionalism and accountability within our Town Government that are not voted in (again this may help along with good management overall).
3. Why did our Town Council have a straw vote? This seems 100% not on the up and up as it then may influence people on the board down the road. This has drawn a dark shadow on the town council and was done without the entire town's well being in mind.

4. Our current Town manager has shown he is A+ for fiscal management and then "D" on all other departments(don't take my word for it, review the 360 input...or not if there isn't any, talk to the workers). The residents and the workers deserve well managed professional leadership at Town Hall. In order to have this we need a change from the status quo. The people that work for the town and the residents deserve better and the current system is failing them.

13. 2/22/21

Kim Modi

26 Parker St.

Salary should be reviewed as part of the review; we have some of the most well-paid civil servants in the Commonwealth and they are nominally responsive to citizen concerns.

14. 2/24/21

Deborah Peterson

I have bcc'd all the members of the CRC on this email.

I can't decide what form of government I want if I don't know what outcomes I want. Neither can the Charter Review Committee.

I understand the frustration that led to the straw poll at the most recent Charter Review Committee Meeting. The process to date has been informative but not deliberative. The recommendations of this committee need to represent a strong consensus, so when it comes to approval by voters it will have broad support. You have made a great effort to be even handed but I think the Committee now needs a more directed approach – a guided discussion where all members will share what they hope to fix and what they want to preserve as a starting place to identifying some shared desired outcomes. Based on conversations to date, I believe there are many areas of concordance which can then be the basis for exploring charter options. Divergent points of view are also likely but linking outcomes to charter changes would ground the deliberation in tangible and supportive rationales rather than partisan allegiance to a particular form of city government.

I know you hope for encourage public feedback and it has been difficult with remote meetings. I think you need to prioritize where public input is most important and I would argue that it is most important in determining desired outcomes. This is an area where community members can more easily weigh in and give input. . The transparency that would result from agreement on shared outcomes based on robust public input may reduce the volume of public input in subsequent stages. Please take a look at the "Platform of Ideas" [link](#) being generated by Watertown Forward to see a summary of charter related issues organized by themes raised by a diverse group of community members. As you can see, community members are invested in the outcomes more than the "form" and this is an area where the public is ready to engage.

I know many on the Committee and respect the varied points of view they bring to the task. Given the opportunity, I believe a more transparent discussion of desired outcomes will result in more shared outcomes and at the very least a better understanding of the rationale for choices and trade-offs among them. For charter revisions that will both improve what needs fixing and preserve what is working well, you do have to start with an accounting and find common ground on what's working and what's not.

Thanks for your hard and continuing work.

15. 2/26/21
Aaron Dushku
121 Garfield Street

Dear CRC,

I have been sitting on some ideas for a while with the intention of putting more time and work into perfecting them but I've come to the realization that there are no perfect solutions and that I'm sending these to provide some food for thought as you weed through the many other ideas being presented to you. I am also aware that some of these might not necessarily be charter issues but I'm keeping them in because a new charter might want to include some of them and if not, at least you'll get a taste for what's on my mind after my time on the council. I know that there are often unintended consequences of any action and that you're talking those through in great detail so no hard feelings if you've already discussed and want to discard these.

For starters, I think we should keep a TC/TM style of government because a lot of things DO work well and we are blessed that we have some good and well-intentioned people working in those roles now who work very hard within the current system. BUT, I believe that we should institute ways for the elected councilors to have more power over certain key matters and to see more responsiveness from the executive branch to their concerns and ideas.

Here are three areas that I've been thinking about and some thoughts:

I. Ideas to change the Town Council

Add at-large seats. Will give less power to district councilors who represent fewer actual voters and make change happen more easily for a greater majority of voting and engaged residents. I think that this is a nod to those who appreciate a Town Meeting-style government because it will allow their ideas to have a louder pulpit and more power when they express them to their elected representatives. Alternative idea might be to redistrict the town creating 5 districts divided up into districts evenly-sized by active voters and do this every 5 years. This would help to more easily plan for staffing at the polls, also.

Consider making TC terms longer and w staggered elections. Currently, the second year of elected terms can become more about campaigning and about the fear of taking decisive action and jeopardizing re-election hopes. This can paralyze the whole council as it tries to enact new policies.

Increase the pay for councilors. I'm aware that this is an issue that's been before committees and it might not be popular but I stand by it as a way to attract more candidates and to engage citizenry in substantive policy change and debate as a basis for more meaningful elections.

Like Council Vice President and School Committee Chair, consider making the TC president (TCP) elected by TC from its membership and not in its own separate election. This might not change a lot with respect to the current TC but in future, it would reward natural leaders who emerge and continue to foster good teamwork. It might also allow for more turnover in the job from year to year which might be good -especially if the TCP ever loses confidence from the majority of the TC. (Nothing against Mark

and Vinnie who are both excellent leaders but I think that this is something we need to plan for as those two will eventually reach an end to their public service commitments and careers.). I think that it would also give a better understanding to the roles and responsibilities of the TCP which I suspect often go unnoticed by most people. Furthermore, it doesn't force ambitious councilors to choose between making a run at TCP and keeping their current seat.

II. Change appointment rules for important positions to shift some control to TC,

Council Clerk -too dependent on TC President to do it all himself. The process is not well described as to how he is supposed to fill the position. I am not particularly outraged or concerned by the impacts of the current setup (Marilyn does a good job) but I remember that there was uncertainty when we filled the position last and I was surprised at how little process was prescribed.

Police Chief and Planning Board members -I think that positions that are so powerful and important to the community, should be appointed by the elected officials. Just like the Superintendent of Schools is hired by the School Committee. These are jobs where the selected individuals get a ton of scrutiny from the public and I recall that there was always a lot of energy spent by active citizens trying to find ways to participate and influence these decisions whenever I witnessed those positions getting filled.

Can we formalize a process whereby a special TC or citizen's committee is called for this?

-if this is too much to swallow, maybe make final appointment only binding after sharing a rubric of top candidate evaluations for discussion in advance of any appointment/confirmation vote. Otherwise, the council has no means to compare candidates when they make their appointment vote. As things stand now, we all know very little about the candidates for these positions before they are hired and this feels wrong. Let's pull that curtain back a little.

III. Town Manager responsiveness/Town Councilor influence and feedback loops...

More frequent evaluations or feedback opportunities should be considered for the Town Manager and this could give a little more power to the elected members of the town government. If more frequent, this feedback would be less emotional and would carry less drastic repercussions from a bad review (like the TM losing his job or his annual salary increase). It would also allow more room for timely criticism and for the manager to demonstrate responsiveness to it faster. The budget priority guidelines are not mentioned in the town charter except in the way that councilors are permitted to propose budget items to the TM each year. This successful vehicle should be formalized in the charter as it offers a chance at annual feedback in this way for financial matters. The TC has no such annual feedback avenue for policy and management matters. It is very difficult for TC to engage the town's professional staff in meaningful ways to implement new policies. Staff are often put into a precarious situation when approached by councilors as they know that their one true master is the town manager.

A charter-mandated 'policy priorities' guidelines (PPG) process might also give TC's a better idea of the methods used by TM to address policy matters. It would also give TC a little more power to influence department staff without undergoing the full ordinance development or amendment process or proclamations. Such a process would also break down some of the parliamentary guard-rails and limitations that TC have in engaging the TM over policy. As the BFO Committee oversees the BPG (budget priority guidelines) development process, these PPG's could be developed by a new policy committee but by following the same blueprint (e.g. a guidelines document, a nomination template tabulation, discussion moderation, voting by TC members and a ranking based on those votes). As it is, the annual BPG process is continually flooded with policy-related suggestions from councilors who try to

word them as budget (or personnel) issues and the BFO committee rejects them as they're not relevant to the scope of their exercise. The detailed process may not need to be detailed in the charter but the act of providing this annual guidance should be considered.

Here's an example from my time which might illustrate where this might work better: TC and residents have concerns about traffic. TCP unilaterally declares that a committee on transportation be formed and over the next 2 years the committee hammers out the TDM Ordinance and other recommendations. The ordinance development process was laborious and demanded more of the TC and the committee than might normally have been expected. The process benefitted from extra effort and research by committee members, public participants, staff and consultants.

What if, instead, the TC had a ranking sheet at the beginning of the term and listed policy reform for transportation as it's highest priority?

Then, over the course of year 1, the manager asked departments to run through some internal policy review and gathered ideas from peers in their professional community on how to improve things. Ideas got floated back to TC as potential referral items for TC committee action where needed or just became new department-level policies/regulations and got reported back to the TC. At the end of year when the 'policy priority guidelines' were reviewed again by TC, the responsiveness could be evaluated as issues got re-ranked. This would take the hard labor out of the hands of part-time TC members and let the professionals take action without day-to-day micromanagement or repetitive night-meetings over the course of months. It would also give them cover for the multiple (unranked) policy-related pushes that the TC members make in an ad hoc manner throughout their terms. -it also means that we don't need to update the Comprehensive Plan every year when we're trying to prioritize what things will get done.

Just had to get these out to you. I know they're rough and disorganized. Thanks for giving me a forum and for all of your work on things. Hope this helps more than distracts.

16. 2/26/21

Kate Coyne

120 Worcester St.

Will these questions be posted on a website for all to read/responses or do they go into the VOID? (will we get a response or get a response on website? Please respond to my email to let me know one way or the other.

17. 3/10/21

Tina Goldsmith

Dear Charter Review Committee Members,

Thank you for providing us with an opportunity to give feedback about the town. My husband and I are retired and moved to Watertown in August 2019. We love the river, the dam, and taking walks there, et c. We use the library very frequently and love it. I tutor a non-English speaker and find it very rewarding.

We communicate with the town via telephone. We were able to get our water main cleared pretty quickly (in about 4 months) so as to have decent water pressure. We have a parking pass from the senior center which is very helpful. We enjoy receiving the senior newsletter monthly.

Now, what doesn't work so well? What has been extremely egregious during this past winter snowstorms is the state of sidewalks, uncleared. THERE SHOULD BE A TOWN ORDINANCE THAT RESIDENTS MUST CLEAR SNOW FROM ADJACENT PROPERTY SIDEWALKS. We called a few numbers at city hall and the DPW and while everyone was genial, they were unhelpful. It is extremely dangerous to walk in Galen Street when sidewalks there are not cleared. The city should at least clear the most dangerous areas if residents can't or won't do it. By the way, Watertown appears to clear its streets quite well.

Another problem, which we have not called about, is the state of disrepair of the streets that are the closest to the Newton town line. Why aren't they being repaved? I'm speaking specifically of the bottom of Maple Street, and Jackson Road near Morse Street, and the Watertown Street end of Morse Street. Filling potholes and patching is not working!!

Finally, we have the beautiful river running through our town. More resources should be allocated to keeping it cleaner and in better condition, with more plantings, etc.

Overarching, creating more green space, people-friendly walkways -
- yes, Watertown Square is a challenge... My husband would like more bakeries.

With kind regards,

18. 2/28/21
Rita Colafella
56 Cuba St.

Dear Committee,

I cannot help but think that the straw poll at the end of the last CRC on February 16th has negatively impacted the process, especially when several committee members were still investigating all possibilities. If it has not fractionalized the committee, then it has surely introduced undue pressure in a process that is not always frictionless. Going forward, there needs to be less friction in this process.

I strongly recommend the following for a more frictionless process:

- Get a facilitator to take on agenda preparation and meeting mechanics. There needs to be some predictability regarding expectations.
- Open the Zoom. A potential Zoom bomb is preferable to the current setup. A lot of time is spent on discussing the Zoom setup.
- Book four public forums over the next 12 weeks to hear public opinion and ideas before taking any votes on significant items.

This is important work, and unfortunately meeting after meeting, I continue to see complete disengagement from a handful of committee members and open hostility toward change from a couple of members. Watertown is undergoing enormous change, and the status quo or trimming at the

margins won't meet the demands. The data may lag on this now, but by the next charter review in 2030, it will be very evident. Let's make sure to get it right.

19. 2/28/21

Shanti Freundlich

Dear Watertown Charter Review Committee,

My name is Shanti Freundlich, I live at 100 School Street #3 in Watertown. I'm writing to the committee with two requests to increase transparency in communication with the community around the charter review process:

- Please post the minutes from your previous meetings (October 20, 2020 - February 16, 2021) on the [Charter Review website](#), and then continue to post them promptly. While the previous agendas include links to minutes for voting purposes, as of February 28, 2021 the latest minutes posted on the website were from the October 6, 2020 meeting.
- Please add to the Charter Review website and/or to the meeting minutes the questions, comments, suggestions, and other feedback you receive from the public through the form, direct email, Zoom Q&As, and any other format (with individuals' identifying information removed).

Thank you for your work.

20. 3/2/21

Nancy Hammett

119 Riverside St.

I have shared this with the CRC members. I would appreciate this being shared with the Collins Center experts as well. Thank you.

To CRC Committee members:

I am writing as an interested resident to share some comments on the Charter Review process.

I strongly believe that this review is an important opportunity for extensive public input, and is a chance for Watertown to improve its public engagement, whatever the final decisions are about changes to our charter. The issues involved in the Charter Review are complex, and require a good understanding of how our government works in practice (as well as in theory) for residents to provide useful input.

While I understand the desire to reach a decision early on about the meta-question (Manager vs Mayor), I myself find it impossible to have an informed opinion about that question without substantially more discussion and education about the workings of our government. I strongly urge the CRC and its Communications Subcommittee to explore ways to sponsor more open and robust debate and education opportunities about a number of questions, before expecting informed input by most residents on that question.

This could take the form of panel discussions and debates – perhaps with the help of the library – with extensive opportunities for the public to ask questions and make arguments. I know this can be difficult, given time pressures, Committee members’ workloads, and open meeting rules. Perhaps education sessions conducted by the Collins Center, without input from Committee members (to avoid deliberations) but recording so that Committee members and residents could view after the fact. With both verbal questions and chat content preserved. Such events would give less constrained opportunities for public input, and might also reveal factual misunderstandings or divergent assessments about how the government currently works that shape people’s views about desirable charter changes. Clarifying facts and sharing assessments should be done before people are expected to make decisions about what changes are needed.

In addition, I think it’s important to start with a debate about what is and is not working well in Watertown now, followed by an analysis about what structural factors or informal practices contribute to the successes and failures.

Finally, I urge the Committee to make available to the public all the information that the Committee is discussing before the meetings, to give time for people to be informed listeners, and to share information on the results of the CRC poll and other relevant material. Much progress has already been made in sharing useful information – from the Collins Center and elsewhere – on the Committee website, which is very encouraging. Thank you.

I will submit further comments shortly about specific topics I would welcome more education and discussion on, regarding how the government currently works.

Thank you for considering my comments. And thank you for the time and energy the Committee is putting into this important effort.

21. 3/7/21
Jacky vanLeeuwen
Whites Ave

Do we screen our police officers and new applicants for white supremacist beliefs? Does Chief Lawn get evaluated for a culture of and commitment to anti-racism among his officers?
Do other department heads get evaluated for a culture of and commitment to anti-discrimination?
What is the retention rate of people of color in town hall departments?
Please consider these concerns when finalizing charter changes.

Thank you.

22. 3/7/21
Tiffany York

CRC Committee, please add this recommendation to the agenda for the city's CIO role and to the notes and upcoming CRC meeting to push for immediate discussion and vote on- a strategy for City Govt Communications Transparency.

Transparency in City Govt Communications (a roadmap not exhaustive)

- THRESHOLD will need to be set and will need to be reviewed annually to determine if in fact its creating any impacts on timelines (for example: decisions that affect over 10% of residents... or a policy that would affect over 5 local businesses.... or a zoning change/creation that would affect families with children school... these thresholds will help set up a culture of transparency)
- 30-90 day public comment period for any decision; proposal has to be aired on TV, online segments, community organization, filed into official record (held at library), town hall postings, and emailed out by each councilor to each district;
- Response to public comments are REQUIRED (this allows for agency by any resident to act if decision impacts them after they have commented re: decision);
- Redraft/resubmission REQUIRED after public comment window;

Thank you for continued commitment to transparency and accountability.

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Please know that I honor and respect boundaries around personal time, caretaking, rest, and well-being. If you receive this message while engaged in any of the above, please protect your time.

23. 3/7/21

Tiffany York

CRC Committee, please add this recommendation to the notes and upcoming CRC meeting to push for immediate discussion and vote on- a strategy for City Govt roles:: Accountability.

Term Limits

No person shall be eligible to be elected as a member of the town council if, at any point during the term of office for which the person may be appointed or elected, the service of the eligible person would exceed 8 consecutive years on the town council.

(a) is a candidate or appointment for the office (or committee) of XYZ per Watertown Govt,

(b) is a candidate or appointment for the office (or committee) of Town Manager/Council or

(c) is a candidate or appointment for the office (or committee) of XYZ Watertown Govt Org Chart,

(i) any person elected or appointed to the office (or committee) of XYZ Town Govt

→ Desired Outcome is to get Term Limits to 4 years. Realizing we come from no term limits, it's possible we set this up initially as a higher number with a caveat/goal of getting to 4 years.

→ Desired Outcome is to apply Term Limits, or ability to apply, whether we stay Town Council/Manager or move to a Mayor in future years.

Thank you for continued commitment to transparency and accountability.

Tiffany York

24. 3/12/21

Rita Colafella

56 Cuba St.

Dear Committee,

I want to tell the Charter committee that last week's meeting was better managed. Keep that up. Mike did a very good job of leading the way. I appreciate the committee's holding back and letting the process run.

Lastly, I do like the idea of a two track system because it does not appear like we have much time, and in my opinion, Zoom is not conducive for this kind of activity. I would like a committee to reconvene less in than 2 years, preferable 16-18 months. Any more time than that would remove urgency and lead to reactive solutions.

Thanks for taking the feedback.

25. 3/15/21
Merle Kummer
375 Arlington Street

Dear Charter Review Committee member,

I'm a Watertown homeowner. I'm writing to support the Collins Center two-track proposal, with the years end in in 3, so we can review the charter again in 2023.

26. 3/15/21
Deborah Peterson

To the Charter Review Committee,

It seems clear to me that the current committee and current process will be unable to deliver a new charter in the available time and the Collins two track proposal offers a way forward. The level of community dissatisfaction with current town functioning has been made clear during these meetings. The extent of this dissatisfaction in almost all areas of town government regarding vision, communication, responsiveness, and transparency calls for a larger process that entertains more transformative options that will take time and more dialogue.

The community representatives on the current Charter Committee chosen by the Town Council President have very effectively articulated what I see as our collective needs. They have delved into the issues deeply and I would hope they will be given priority for the new ad hoc group.

It has been frustrating to me that the current Committee did not identify common goals and desired outcomes for change. I hope they can do this before disbanding. Identifying specific outcomes will provide a transparent platform for evaluating alternative approaches and a evaluation tool for assessing success.

My gratitude to all of you who have served with good will and hard work on this committee.

27. 3/16/21

Jacky van Leeuwen

Charter Review Committee,

I am writing to give my feedback to Mike Ward's proposal. It may be too early in the process, but I also am providing my thoughts about Mike Ward's ["Potential Areas for Discussion"](#).

I agree with changing the year for the next review, although I favor a bit of a longer transition so that the next review would be **2025**. This would give adequate time for a Town Manager to be evaluated and the overall governance reviewed based on the changes we are able to make in this cycle.

I have had this opinion from early on as I could not see making a major change to mayor without assessing whether our current form can 'change with the times'. Once we have agreed on a commitment to goals/visions and have specified expectations related to good governance, we can assess how our current form is working.

I agree with paring down the Charter Review Committee to 9 non-Town Council members. I haven't heard other views on this and I'd be curious to hear them.

I hope, in the next few months, we can focus on making significant changes to the charter and be better poised next time to both **improve public engagement** and to **use the new metrics and visions/goals to evaluate governance**.

I went through Mike Ward's ["Potential Areas for Discussion"](#) (2/16/21 Collins) where he suggested areas to focus on, many based on public feedback (much highlighted in the [Platform of Ideas](#)).

The areas where the suggestion may be more than 'minor' (in my opinion) and will need some focus:

1. Length of Town Councilor terms (Article 2). *(I think they should expand to 4 years).*
2. Town Council to elect TC President or remain as is?
3. Council President to give an Annual State of the City report/address.
4. Council President on School Committee?
5. Access to Information Article 2-6 had no suggestions for changes and I don't have any but I'd be curious about others' thoughts, especially from the Town Councilors.
6. Article 2-7 suggestion to add admin/analyst/legal asst to support TC. *(I support this).*
7. Article 2-9 suggestion to add Annual Town-wide public forum.
8. Residency requirements for Town Manager? Eliminate waiver? Article 3-1
9. Article 3-2 language which specifies/strengthens expectations of TM re: following policy direction and long term vision of TC. *(I support this).*
10. Add to duties of TM, as suggested by M. Ward, related to Communication.
11. Change process of picking board and committee members?
12. Expand Article 3-6 re: Evaluation of TM
13. No major changes in Article 4 (School Comm)
14. Financial

Can committees be formed (as with Preamble) to break down some areas and expedite language change proposals?

Such as, several committees for Article 3 (Town Manager: 9, 10, 11, 12 from above). One for review of Article 5 (Financial), one for Town Councilor terms, etc....

Thank you for all the hard work and challenges of guiding this process.